



**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program - Farm Bill
Fiscal Year 2021**

Request for Response (RFR): RFR File: [AGR-SC-2021](#)

To address the goals the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) has for enhancing the competitiveness of Specialty Crops. Specialty crops are defined by the USDA as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture (including maple syrup and honey), nursery crops (including floriculture).

**Responses must be received by
5:00PM Friday, April 9, 2021
Contact: Keri Cornman
Email: Keri.Cornman@mass.gov**



**Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
251 Causeway Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02114**

Contents of Request for Response

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
Grant Announcement. RFR ID: AGR-SC-2021. Dated: **Friday, January 29, 2021**
Kathleen Theoharides, Secretary
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

1. GRANT OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY:	
Proposals Sought For:	The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (“MDAR”) is soliciting proposals for projects that specifically address the goals the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) has for enhancing the competitiveness of Specialty Crops . <i>Specialty crops are defined by the USDA as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture (including maple syrup and honey), nursery crops (including floriculture).</i>
Overview and Goals:	<p>The overall goal of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (“SCBGP”) is to leverage efforts to market and promote specialty crops, assist producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops, expand availability and access to specialty crops, and to address local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers. MDAR’s goal with the SCBGP is to increase access to healthy, affordable food options, with a preference for fresh, locally-sourced, Massachusetts-grown, caught or harvested healthy food, and to improve economic opportunities for nutritionally underserved communities in urban, rural, and suburban localities.</p> <p>A full definition and a list of Specialty Crops can be found on the USDA—Specialty Crop Website, www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp. The USDA is the final approver and funding entity for the Specialty Crop Grant Program. While MDAR will conduct the initial review of project proposals and make recommendations to USDA, USDA shall make the final decision concerning grant awards.</p> <p>SCBGP projects can be 1-3 years in length. Projects must be completed within three (3) years. The grant period must begin no earlier than October 1, 2021, and end no later than September 29, 2024. Applicants must indicate the start and end dates on application Form C.</p>
Funding Availability:	<p>The Department intends to fund approximately \$400,000 in projects, which will result from this competitive RFR process. All funding is subject to appropriation. The suggested dollar value of projects is between \$40,000 and \$90,000 per project. The SCBGP does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement.</p> <p>A successful respondent will enter into a contract with MDAR. MDAR reserves the right to fund the project in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline and budget. MDAR may ask grantees to acknowledge MDAR as a grantor where appropriate. No contract shall be entered into until MDAR is satisfied with all the specifications of the project.</p> <p>Any grant award is dependent upon the availability of federal funds and the final approval from the USDA. Any successful contractor will be required to follow all the applicable federal and state regulations that pertain to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.</p>
Reporting Requirements:	<p>The recipient shall be required to submit progress reports on a regular basis. Due dates for progress reports shall be specified in the contract’s Work Plan and Scope of Services. The reports may require, among other things, a narrative detailing how project goals are being completed, details of obstacles that are preventing the project from being completed, and an expenditure report detailing how the grant funding is being expended.</p> <p>Late or incomplete reports will result in a site visit by MDAR staff to assess program performance, and may result in the suspension of the project and any related payments. Ongoing reporting issues may result in ineligibility for future MDAR grants.</p>

Deadline:	<p>Applications must be received by 5:00 PM Friday, April 9, 2021. Postmarks and late email submissions will not be considered. You may submit proposals via email to Keri.Cornman@mass.gov</p> <p>Applications that are sent by fax will NOT be accepted. If you wish to receive confirmation of your submission, you must select an email delivery receipt through your own email system. MDAR will not accept any late submissions, and will not consider late applications due to technical difficulties, so please be mindful of your submission timeliness.</p>
Additional Information	<p>Informational Webinars where questions may be asked will be held for interested applicants on the dates listed below. Please contact Rebecca Davidson at Rebecca.Davidson@mass.gov to request access to one or more webinars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday, February 18th, 2021 at 9:00am • Tuesday, March 2nd, 2021 at 4:00pm • Friday, March 19th, 2021 at 12:00pm <p>To the extent applicable at the time a project is commenced under the terms of any contract, projects must be conducted in accordance applicable federal, state, and local public health orders, regulations, ordinances, or other guidance issued related to COVID-19.</p>
Contact	<p>Keri Cornman, Department of Agricultural Resources 251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114 Email: Keri.Cornman@mass.gov</p>

2. PERFORMANCE AND CONTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

A. Eligible Applicants:

Socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers, eligible non-profit organizations, local government entities, for-profit organizations, industry trade associations, producer groups, and commodity commissions can submit projects that aim to enhance the production and competitiveness of Massachusetts specialty crop industries, provided their proposals meet all the specifications in this Request for Response (RFR) and the USDA. **Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.** Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

Beginning Farmer or Rancher is defined as “an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than ten (10) years and substantially participates in the operation.”

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is defined as “a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program.”

B. Eligible Project Areas:

While all projects that meet SCBGP requirements will be considered, the categories listed below are examples of eligible projects.

Projects must be related to enhancing the competitiveness of Specialty Crops; specifically in regards to the following areas specified by USDA. Visit <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/awards> to view grant awards for projects that have been funded from 2006 – 2020.

Examples of Eligible Projects:

- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
- Assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution process in implementing practices and standards that improve food safety which may include, but are not limited to, the “Commonwealth Quality Program”, “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”, and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers, and processors;
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- Pest and disease control;
- Development of organic and sustainable production practices;
- Enhancing food safety;
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors; and
- Sustainability.

C. Ineligible Project Areas:

Examples of Ineligible Projects:

- A proposal for funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single business;
- A proposal for funds from a specialty crop organization to promote their members’ businesses;
- A proposal for capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land;
- A proposal that seeks to support a non-specialty crop project.

D. Funding Availability & Allowable Expenditures

Funding

MDAR intends to fund approximately \$400,000 in projects which will result from this competitive RFR process. All funding is subject to appropriation. The suggested dollar value of projects is between \$40,000 and \$90,000 per project, though there is no required minimum or maximum project amount.

A successful respondent will enter into a contract with MDAR. MDAR reserves the right to fund the project in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline and budget. MDAR may ask grantees to acknowledge MDAR as a grantor where appropriate. No contract shall be entered into until MDAR is satisfied with all the specifications of the project.

Any grant award is dependent upon the availability of federal funds and the final approval from the USDA. Any successful contractor will be required to follow all the applicable federal and state regulations that pertain to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

	Applicants <i>will not</i> be able to request indirect funds for this project.
Invoicing and Disbursement of Grant Funds	<p>Successful Applicants will receive funding on a reimbursement basis only. Contracts shall require the applicant to invoice MDAR on a pre-determined schedule unless a waiver is provided by MDAR. All invoices at a minimum must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date(s) of service covered; • Invoice number; • Invoice date; • Full contact information for the contracted entity; and • Sufficient supporting documentation to show that all reimbursed costs are allowable, reasonable/necessary, and allocable. Supporting documentation may include, but is not limited to, canceled checks, receipts, paid bills, payroll, and contracts. <p>Invoices that are incomplete, fail to meet the invoicing schedule, and/or include unauthorized charges will not be paid, and may result in a site visit by MDAR staff to review financial and programmatic documents. Repeated invoicing issues may result in ineligibility for future SCBGP grants.</p>
E. Reporting	
Reporting	<p>The recipient shall be required to submit progress reports on a regular basis. Due dates for progress reports shall be specified in the contract's Work Plan and Scope of Services. The reports may require, among other things, a narrative detailing how project goals are being completed, details of obstacles that are preventing the project from being completed, and an expenditure report detailing how the grant funding is being expended.</p> <p>It is the recipient's duty to adhere to deadlines for reporting stated in the contract's Work Plan and Scope of Services. Late or incomplete reports will result in a site visit by MDAR staff to assess program performance, and may result in the suspension of the project and any related payments. Ongoing reporting issues may result in ineligibility for future MDAR grants.</p>
F. Evaluation Criteria: Responses will be scored using the following measures:	
<p>The Application (Form C) must be submitted, and shall be evaluated based upon how well it meets the required criteria. Applications with the highest scores will serve as recommendations to the Commissioner, and the Commissioner has final say before final recommendations are sent to USDA. All "required" criteria must be satisfied for the proposal to be deemed eligible for consideration.</p> <p>Criteria [Out of a Possible 75 Points]:</p>	

- a. Applications must answer Yes or No – Does the project ensure it does not benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual? [No point value. If “No,” evaluation will not continue and the project will not be considered. If “Yes,” evaluation of the project will continue.].
- b. The proposal clearly demonstrates an explicit project purpose that addresses a specific issue, problem, interest, or need that is timely and important. [15 points](REQUIRED);
- c. The proposal lists and demonstrates clear, defined objectives that relate to the project purpose. Projects should show a clear project approach with unambiguous goals and objectives [10 points] (REQUIRED);
- d. The proposal identifies at least one (1) Expected Measurable Outcome, as defined by USDA (**see below**), that directly and meaningfully supports the Project’s Purpose and Objectives and at least one (1) of the indicators listed underneath the selected Outcome(s) or created by the applicant if listed indicators are not relevant. (REQUIRED) [10 points];
- e. The proposal clearly defines a data collection plan and/or methods to report on selected Outcomes and Indicators [10 points]
- f. The proposal demonstrates effective timeline with task accountability throughout project implementation [10 points] (REQUIRED);
- g. The project will add to new knowledge or expertise to effectively promote the competitiveness of Specialty Crops as a whole [5 points];
- h. The project will demonstrate and disseminate replicable practices and results [5 points];
- i. The proposal includes a well-constructed and detailed budget [10 points](REQUIRED);
 - o If Program Income is expected to be earned as part of the project, provide an estimate of that income and describe how it will be used to further expand the project or program objectives and solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops.
 - o No indirect charges are to be included in the financial plan.
- j. For applicants with **previous history** of receiving MDAR grant funding, **the applicant has consistently met reporting and invoicing requirements**. New applicants will receive a score of zero. [0 points, range of 0 to -10 (negative 10) points]

The evaluation team may have to cut funding requests to one or more awarded applicants who meet minimum requirements, depending on available funding and the amount of funding applicants request. A score cut-off will be determined by the evaluation team after final scores have been tallied, and applicants below that cut off may either receive a funding cut proportional to the amount they requested in relation to other below-score cutoff applicants, or no funding (and only projects above the cut-off will receive funding). The Department and the evaluation team reserves the right to determine the score cut-off it believes is in the best interest of the SCBGP.

Fiscal Year 2021 - Expected Measurable Outcomes (See Criterion d.)

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (“AMS”) is required to report on the outcomes of the SCBGP at a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all states and territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCBGP with all stakeholders, including the Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”), Congress, the agricultural community, and the general public.

Full Proposals must identify at least one (1) of the AMS-defined expected measureable outcomes listed below, and at least one (1) indicator for each selected outcome. Additionally, if there are multiple sub-indicators under the selected indicator, select at least one (1). If the indicator(s) below the selected outcome(s) are not relevant to a project, a project specific indicator(s) may be developed which will be subject to approval by MDAR and AMS.

Funded entities will be required to provide progress updates using identified indicators on all performance reports and final reports. AMS will aggregate the data collected to assess the overall impact of the program and report to OMB and Congress on these national outcome measures. AMS will review the quality of the information received in subsequent performance reports and modify the outcomes and indicators as needed over time to lead to better results in showing the impact of the SCBGP.

Outcome/Indicator Options:

Outcome 1: “To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales.”

THIS OUTCOME IS MANDATORY FOR ALL MARKETING AND PROMOTION PROJECTS.

Outcome Definition:

Marketing and Promotion

Marketing and promotion projects focus efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. These include, but are not limited to:

- Uses of social media to market and promote;
- Specialty crop local, regional, and national campaigns;
- Specialty crop only tradeshow;
- Website promotion and development;
- Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads, marketing materials such as direct mail, brochures;
- Agritourism;
- Export market development;
- Retail promotions including point-of-purchase items, labels, packaging etc.;
- Farmers market promotions; and
- Marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers.

The specific measure must be expressed as a dollar value and percentage increase in sales of one or more specialty crops in one or more States or foreign markets as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities. For example, an expected outcome of growth in sales from 5% to 10% is not acceptable by itself, but in combination with an increase in sales of \$1 million to \$2 million it is acceptable. This requirement means that an established baseline of sales in dollars should already exist at the time of application. For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars, one of the objectives of the project must be to determine such a baseline in order to meet the requirement to document the value of sales increases by the end of the project.

Indicator:

1. Sales increase from \$_____ to \$_____ and by ____ percent, as result of marketing and/or promotion activities.

*AMS understands that sales can be impacted by a host of unrelated issues including trade disputes, phytosanitary issues, export conditions, weather, and other factors affecting the farmer, supply chain, retailers, wholesalers and/or consumers. The above factors demonstrate that even a perfectly executed marketing campaign can result in sales remaining constant or even declining. These factors and events that either positively or negatively impacted the sales of a project can be explained in the performance report.

Outcome 2: “Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption.”

Indicators:

1. Of the _____ total number of children and youth reached:
 - a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops.
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops.
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops.
2. Of the _____ total number of adults reached:
 - a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops.
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops.
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops.
3. Number of new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents) _____.
4. Number of new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers _____.

Outcome 3: “Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access and awareness.”

Indicators:

1. Of the ____ total number of consumers or wholesale buyers reached:
 - a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops.
 - b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops.
 - c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/preserved/obtained/prepared
2. Of the ____ total number of individuals (culinary professionals, institutional kitchens, specialty crop entrepreneurs such as kitchen incubators/shared-use kitchens, etc.) reached:
 - a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access, produce, prepare, and/or preserve specialty crops ____.
 - b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops ____.
 - c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/prepared/preserved/obtained ____.
3. Number of existing delivery systems/access points of those reached that expanded and/or improved offerings of specialty crops:
 - a. Farmers markets ____.
 - b. Produce at corner stores ____.
 - c. School food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.) ____.
 - d. Grocery stores ____.
 - e. Wholesale markets ____.
 - f. Food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops.
 - g. Home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers ____.
 - h. Lawn and garden centers ____.
 - i. Other systems/access points, not noted ____.
 - j. Total (if not reported above) ____.
4. Number of new delivery systems/access points offering specialty crops:
 - a. Farmers markets ____.
 - b. Produce at corner stores ____.
 - c. School food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.) ____.
 - d. Grocery stores ____.
 - e. Wholesale markets ____.
 - f. Food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops.
 - g. Home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers ____.
 - h. Lawn and garden centers ____.
 - i. Other systems/access points, not noted ____.
 - j. Total (if not reported above) ____.

Outcome 4: “Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops though greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources.”

Indicators:

1. Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e., cultivars, drought-tolerant plants, organic, enhanced nutritional composition, etc.) ____.
2. Number of habitat acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators and specialty crops ____.
3. Adoption of best practices and technologies resulting in increased yields, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and conservation of resources (select at least one below):
 - a. Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices ____.
 - b. Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre ____.
 - c. Number of producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre ____.
 - d. Number of acres in conservation tillage or acres in other best management practices ____.

Outcome 5: “Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems.”

Indicators:

1. Number of new or improved innovation models (biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc. developed for specialty crop entities including producers, processors, distributors, etc. ____.
2. Number of innovations adopted ____.
3. Number of specialty crop growers/producers (and other members of the specialty crop supply chain) that have increased revenue expressed in dollars ____.
4. Number of new diagnostic systems analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases. [Diagnostic systems refer to, among other things: labs, networks, procedures, access points.] ____.
5. Number of new diagnostic technologies available for detecting plant pests and diseases. [The intent here is not to count individual pieces of equipment or devices, but to enumerate technologies that add to the diagnostic capacity.] ____.
6. Number of first responders trained in early detection and rapid response to combat plant pests and diseases ____.
7. Number of viable technologies/processes developed or modified that will increase specialty crop distribution and/or production ____.
8. Number of growers/producers that gained knowledge about science-based tools through outreach and education programs ____.

Outcome 6: “Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety.”

Indicators:

1. Number of viable technologies developed or modified for the detection and characterization of specialty crop supply contamination from foodborne threats ____.
2. Number of viable prevention, control and intervention strategies for all specialty crop production scales for foodborne threats along the production continuum ____.
3. Number of individuals who learn about prevention, detection, control, and intervention food safety practices and number of those individuals who increase their food safety skills and knowledge ____.
4. Number of improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention technologies ____.
5. Number of reported changes in prevention, detection, control, and intervention strategies ____.

Outcome 7: “Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources.”

Indicators:

1. Number of projects focused on (select at least one below):
 - a. Increased understanding of fecal indicators and pathogens ____.
 - b. Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain ____.
 - c. Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants and animals as vectors ____.
 - d. Increased understanding of pre-harvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats ____.
 - e. Number of growers or producers obtaining on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices) ____.

Outcome 8: “Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development.”

Indicators:

1. Number of new rural careers created ____.

2. Number of new urban careers created ____.
3. Number of jobs maintained/created ____.
4. Number of small businesses maintained/created ____.
5. Increased revenue/increased savings/one-time capital purchases (in dollars) ____.
6. Number of new beginning farmers who went into specialty crop production ____.
7. Number of socially disadvantaged famers who went into specialty crop production ____.

Additional information/definitions:

- “Jobs” specifically refers to net a gain of paid employment. “Careers” can indicate new businesses created or adopted.
- “Beginning Farmer” is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.
- “Socially Disadvantaged Farmer” is a farmer who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

G. Application Submission Instructions:

An application form is attached and must be completed and received by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources by the response deadline. **Applicants must submit proposals via EMAIL to Keri.Cornman@mass.gov by the deadline of Friday, April 9, 2021 at 5:00pm.** Applications that are sent by fax will **NOT** be accepted. If you wish to receive confirmation of your submission, you must select an email delivery receipt through your own email system. MDAR will not accept any late submissions, and will not consider late applications due to technical difficulties, so please be mindful of your submission timeliness.

No application will be accepted after the due date. Form C is competitively ranked, and scored by a Review Panel. Applicants must fill out the SCBGP application posted both on Commbuys listed as Form C and also posted on MDAR's website. All materials must be sent to the attention of:

**Keri Cornman, Grants Manager, Department of Agricultural Resources,
Suite 500, 251 Causeway Street, Boston, MA 02114
Keri.Cornman@mass.gov**

H. Additional Required Documentation

If selected, the applicant(s) will be required to submit the following forms to complete the contract: Commonwealth Standard Contract Form and Commonwealth Terms and Conditions, filled out and signed by the applicant(s); Scope and Budget Form; Commonwealth W-9 tax information form filled out and signed by the applicant(s); Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Verification Form; Completed Electronic Funds Transfer Form; Proof of entity good standing in Massachusetts and IRS letter of Determination as 501 entity, if applicable. Assistance to complete these forms will be provided to Respondents selected to participate in the Program. These forms are available for review at www.mass.gov/osd or by request.

3. DEADLINES AND PROCUREMENT CALENDAR

A. Release of RFR:	Friday, January 29, 2021
B. Application Deadline:	5:00PM, April 9, 2021

C. State Plan Submitted to the USDA:	May, 2020 (subject to change)
D. Estimated Contract Start Date:	The grant period may begin on October 1, 2021 or later. Eligible costs are those incurred only after an award is issued and a final scope of services has been negotiated and executed by all parties. Costs incurred prior to the executed contract shall not be eligible for reimbursement. The effective start date of a contract shall be the latest of the following dates: the date the Standard Contract Form has been executed by an authorized signatory of the contractor and the procuring department; the date of secretariat or other approval(s) required by law or regulation; or a later date specified in the Standard Contract Form.
E. Webinars	<p>Informational Webinars where questions may be asked will be held for interested applicants on the dates listed below. Please contact Rebecca Davidson at Rebecca.Davidson@mass.gov to request access to one or more webinars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday, February 18th, 2021 at 9:00am • Tuesday, March 2nd, 2021 at 4:00pm • Friday, March 19th, 2021 at 12:00pm

4. RFR SPECIFICATIONS

A. Type of Procurement: Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant
B. Use of This Procurement by Single or Multiple Departments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This RFR is single department procurement. Contracts awarded under this RFR will be utilized solely by MDAR.
C. Number of Grantees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDAR is looking to award multiple grants.
D. Anticipated Contract Duration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDAR, subject to notification of awards by the USDA, will negotiate with all successful respondents within the established three year grant period. The grant period may begin on October 1, 2021 or later. All projects shall be completed by September 29, 2024 or earlier.
E. RFR Distribution Method:

- This RFR has been distributed by MDAR's Farm and Market Newsletter, posted to the program's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and by a distribution list of requested applicants.
- This RFR has been distributed electronically via COMMBUYS. It is the responsibility of every Applicant to check COMMBUYS for any addenda or modifications to an RFR to which they intend to respond. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its subdivisions accept no liability and will provide no accommodations to Applicants who fail to check for amended RFRs and submit inadequate or incorrect responses. Potential Respondents are advised to check the "last change" field on the summary page of RFRs for which they intend to submit a response to ensure they have the most recent RFR files.
- Respondents may not alter RFR language or any RFR component files. Those submitting a proposal must respond in accordance to the RFR directions and complete only those sections that prompt a Respondent for a response. Modifications to the body of this RFR, specifications, terms and conditions, or which change the intent of this RFR are prohibited. Any unauthorized alterations will disqualify response.

SCBGP PROJECT PROFILE (FORM C)

The State Plan should include a series of project profiles that detail the necessary information to fulfill the goals and objectives of each project. The acceptable font size for the narrative is 11 or 12 pitch with all margins at 1 inch. The following information must be included in each project profile.

PROJECT TITLE

Provide a descriptive project title in 15 words or less in the space below.

DURATION OF PROJECT

Start Date: _____ Start Date

End Date: _____ End Date

PROJECT PARTNER AND SUMMARY

Include a project summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. A Project Summary provides a very brief (one sentence, if possible) description of your project. A Project Summary includes:

- 1. The name of the applicant organization that if awarded a grant will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the State department of agriculture to lead and execute the project,*
- 2. A concise outline the project's outcome(s), and*
- 3. A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.*

FOR EXAMPLE:

The ABC University will mitigate the spread of citrus greening (Huanglongbing) by developing scientifically-based practical measures to implement in a quarantine area and disseminating results to stakeholders through grower meetings and field days.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

PROJECT PURPOSE

PROVIDE THE SPECIFIC ISSUE, PROBLEM OR NEED THAT THE PROJECT WILL ADDRESS THAT IS TIMELY AND IMPORTANT

PROVIDE A LISTING OF THE OBJECTIVES THAT THIS PROJECT HOPES TO ACHIEVE

Objectives are separate from Expected Measurable Outcomes. Proposals should list and demonstrate clear, defined Objectives that relate to the Project Purpose. Projects should show clear project approach with unambiguous goals and objectives. If awarded, the recipient will be expected to directly report on successes and set-backs of these stated Objectives.

Add more objectives by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete objectives that aren't necessary.

Objective 1

Objective 2

Objective 3

Objective 4

Add other objectives as necessary

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Proposals must show that the project does not benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

Estimate the number of project beneficiaries:.....Enter the Number of Beneficiaries

Does this project directly benefit socially disadvantaged farmers as defined in the RFA?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐

Does this project directly benefit beginning farmers as defined in the RFA?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐

STATEMENT OF ENHANCING SPECIALTY CROPS

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that this project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by [7 U.S.C. 1621](#). Further information regarding the definition of a specialty crop can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp.

☐

CONTINUATION PROJECT INFORMATION

If your project is continuing the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project, address the following:

DESCRIBE HOW THIS PROJECT WILL DIFFER FROM AND BUILD ON PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE A SUMMARY (3 TO 5 SENTENCES) OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE LESSONS LEARNED ON POTENTIAL PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

What was previously learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?

How are the lessons learned and improvements being incorporated into the project to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?

DESCRIBE THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE PROJECT BECOMING SELF-SUSTAINING AND NOT INDEFINITELY DEPENDENT ON GRANT FUNDS

OTHER SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAMS

The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. Did you submit this project to a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?

Yes

☐

No

☐

IF YOUR PROJECT IS RECEIVING OR WILL POTENTIALLY RECEIVE FUNDS FROM ANOTHER FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAM

Identify the Federal or State grant program(s).

-

Describe how the SCBGP project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.

EXTERNAL PROJECT SUPPORT

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project).

EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

SELECT THE APPROPRIATE OUTCOME(S) AND INDICATOR(S)/SUB-INDICATOR(S)

You must choose at least one of the eight outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Performance Measures below](#), which were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to evaluate the performance of the SCBGP on a national level.

Outcome(s) selected should directly and meaningfully support the Project's Purpose and align with Objectives. If awarded, the recipient will be expected to directly report on the results of chosen Outcomes, using language directly from the Work Plan (taken from the accepted Application Form C).

OUTCOME MEASURE(S)

Select the outcome measure(s) that are applicable for this project from the listing below.

- ☐ **Outcome 1:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales (required for marketing projects)
- ☐ **Outcome 2:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption
- ☐ **Outcome 3:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access
- ☐ **Outcome 4:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources
- ☐ **Outcome 5:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems
- ☐ **Outcome 6:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety
- ☐ **Outcome 7:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of the ecology of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources
- ☐ **Outcome 8:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development

OUTCOME INDICATOR(S)

*Provide at least one indicator listed in the [SCBGP Performance Measures](#) and the related quantifiable result. If you have multiple outcomes and/or indicators, repeat this for each outcome/indicator. **Outcome Indicators are listed on Pages 7-10 of the RFR.** Indicators must correspond with the appropriate chosen Outcome(s).*

If awarded, the recipient will be expected to directly report on the quantifiable results of these stated Outcome Indicators, using language directly from the Work Plan (taken from the accepted Application Form C).

FOR EXAMPLE:**Outcome 2, Indicator 1.a.**

Of the 150 total number of children and youth reached, 132 will gain knowledge about eating more specialty crops.

MISCELLANEOUS OUTCOME MEASURE

In the unlikely event that the outcomes and indicators above the selected outcomes are not relevant to your project, you must develop a project-specific outcome(s) and indicator(s) which will be subject to approval by AMS.

DATA COLLECTION TO REPORT ON OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

Explain how you will collect the required data to report on the Outcome(s) and Indicator(s) in the space below. Data collection plans should be clearly defined, and should relate directly to selected Outcome(s) and Indicator(s). Include any and all methods of data collection.

Recipients are expected to have a thorough, outlined data collection plan at time of application submission, prior to project start date. If awarded, the recipient will be expected to directly report on how the data collection plan was utilized in gathering Indicator quantifiable results.

TIMELINE

Provide a detailed timeline of the project. Please include all objectivess and outcomes, and the expected tasks to be completed. A successful timeline is effective and includes task accountability throughout the life of the project.

NEW KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE IN PROMOTING SPECIALTY CROPS

Explain how the project will add to new knowledge or expertise to effectively promote the competitiveness of Specialty Crops as a whole.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Explain how the project will demonstrate and disseminate replicable practices and results.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. If any matching funds will be used and a description of their use is required by the State department of agriculture, the expenses to be covered with matching funds must be described separately. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov). Indirect costs are not allowed for recipients.

EXPENSES FOR OVERALL PROJECT

OVERALL PROJECT Budget Summary	
Expense Category	Funds Requested
Personnel	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Equipment	
Supplies	
Contractual	
Other	
Direct Costs Subtotal	
Indirect Costs	**INDIRECT COSTS N/A FOR SCBGP APPLICANTS**

Total Budget	
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EXPENSES BY COST CATEGORY

PERSONNEL

List the organization's employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Name/Title	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			

Personnel Subtotal	
---------------------------	--

PERSONNEL JUSTIFICATION

For each individual listed in the above table, describe the activities to be completed by name/title including approximately when activities will occur. Add more personnel by copying and pasting the existing listing or deleting personnel that aren't necessary.

Personnel 1:

Personnel 2:

Personnel 3:

Add other Personnel as necessary

FRINGE BENEFITS

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCBGP funds. If fringe rates vary, please provide justification below.

#	Name/Title	Fringe Benefit Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			

#	Name/Title	Fringe Benefit Rate	Funds Requested
3			
4			

Fringe Subtotal	
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FRINGE JUSTIFICATION

TRAVEL

Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Trip Destination	Type of Expense (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)	Unit of Measure (days, nights, miles)	# of Units	Cost per Unit	# of Travelers Claiming the Expense	Funds Requested
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

Travel Subtotal	
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TRAVEL JUSTIFICATION

For each trip listed in the above table describe the purpose of this trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include approximately when the trip will occur. Add more trips by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete trips that aren't necessary.

Trip 1 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Trip 2(Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Trip 3(Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Add other Trips as necessary

CONFORMING WITH YOUR TRAVEL POLICY

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization’s established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with [2 C.F.R. 200.474](#) or [48 C.F.R. subpart 31.2](#), as applicable. ☐

EQUIPMENT

Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the grant. “Special purpose equipment” is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one (1) year and an acquisition cost that **equals or exceeds \$5,000** per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

Rental of "general purpose equipment" must also be described in this section. Purchase of general purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Item Description	Rental or Purchase	Acquire When?	Funds Requested
1				
2				
3				
4				

Equipment Subtotal	
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EQUIPMENT JUSTIFICATION

For each Equipment item listed in the above table describe how this equipment will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Add more equipment by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete equipment that isn't necessary.

Equipment 1:

Equipment 2:**Equipment 3:****Add other Equipment as necessary****SUPPLIES**

List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing **less than \$5,000** per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	# of Units/Pieces Purchased	Acquire When?	Funds Requested

Supplies Subtotal	
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SUPPLIES JUSTIFICATION

Describe the purpose of each supply listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

CONTRACTUAL/CONSULTANT

Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant.) Contractor/consultant rates may not exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in the area (for more information, visit the [OPM](#) website).

ITEMIZED CONTRACTOR(S)/CONSULTANT(S)

Provide a list of contractors/consultants, detailing out the name, hourly/flat rate, and overall cost of the services performed. Please note that any statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.

#	Name/Organization	Hourly Rate/Flat Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			

Contractual/Consultant Subtotal	
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CONTRACTUAL JUSTIFICATION

Provide for each of your real or anticipated contractors listed above a description of the project activities each will accomplish to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Each section should also include a justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives. Include timelines for each activity. If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>) provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses.

Contractor/Consultant 1:

Contractor/Consultant 2:

Contractor/Consultant 3:

Add other Contractors/Consultants as necessary

CONFORMING WITH YOUR PROCUREMENT STANDARDS

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization followed the same policies and procedures used for procurements from non-federal sources, which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in [2 C.F.R. Part 200.317-326](#), as applicable. If the contractor(s)/consultant(s) are not already selected, my organization will follow the same requirements. ☐

OTHER

Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection.

If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units	Acquire When?	Funds Requested

Other Subtotal	
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OTHER JUSTIFICATION

Describe the purpose of each item listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

PROGRAM INCOME

Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient or subrecipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.

Source/Nature of Program Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income

Program Income Total	
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SECTION THREE: ATTESTATION:

By signing this application you attest all statements herein are accurate and true. If requested, you also give permission to a site visit conducted by MDAR before a funding decision is made. All site visits will be arranged with applicants in advance.

Signature: _____ Title: _____

Date: _____

RFR - REQUIRED SPECIFICATIONS:

In general, most of the required contractual stipulations are referenced in the *Standard Contract Form and Instructions* and the *Commonwealth Terms and Conditions* (either version). However, the following RFR provisions must appear in all Commonwealth competitive procurements conducted under 801 CMR 21.00:

The terms of *801 CMR 21.00: Procurement of Commodities and Services* (and *808 CMR 1.00: Compliance, Reporting and Auditing for Human and Social Services*, if applicable) are incorporated by reference into this RFR. Words used in this RFR shall have the meanings defined in 801 CMR 21.00 (and 808 CMR 1.00, if applicable). Additional definitions may also be identified in this RFR. Other terms not defined elsewhere in this document may be defined in OSD's [Glossary of Terms](#). Unless otherwise specified in this RFR, all communications, responses, and documentation must be in English, all measurements must be provided in feet, inches, and pounds and all cost proposals or figures in U.S. currency. All responses must be submitted in accordance with the specific terms of this RFR.

Items with the text, "☞ *Required for POS Only*" specify a requirement for Purchase of Service (POS) human and social services procured under *801 CMR 21.00, Procurement of Commodities or Services, Including Human and Social Services* and *808 CMR 1.00, Compliance, Reporting and Auditing for Human and Social Service*.

COMMBUYS Market Center. COMMBUYS is the official source of information for this Bid and is publicly accessible at no charge at www.commbuys.com. Information contained in this document and in COMMBUYS, including file attachments, and information contained in the related Bid Questions and Answers (Q&A), are all components of the Bid, as referenced in COMMBUYS, and are incorporated into the Bid and any resulting contract.

Bidders are solely responsible for obtaining all information distributed for this Bid via COMMBUYS. Bid Q&A supports Bidder submission of written questions associated with a Bid and publication of official answers.

It is each Bidder's responsibility to check COMMBUYS for:

- Any amendments, addenda or modifications to this Bid, and
- Any Bid Q&A records related to this Bid.

The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility and will provide no accommodation to Bidders who submit a Quote based on an out-of-date Bid or on information received from a source other than COMMBUYS.

COMMBUYS Registration. Bidders may elect to obtain a free COMMBUYS Seller registration which provides value-added features, including automated email notification associated with postings and modifications to COMMBUYS records. However, in order to respond to a Bid, Bidders must register and maintain an active COMMBUYS Seller account.

All Bidders submitting a Quote (previously referred to as Response) in response to this Bid (previously referred to as Solicitation) agree that, if awarded a contract: (1) they will maintain an active seller account in COMMBUYS; (2) they will, when directed to do so by the procuring entity, activate and maintain a COMMBUYS-enabled catalog using Commonwealth Commodity Codes; (3) they will comply with all requests by the procuring entity to utilize COMMBUYS for the purposes of conducting all aspects of purchasing and invoicing with the Commonwealth, as added functionality for the COMMBUYS system is activated; (4) Bidder understands and acknowledges that all references to the Comm-PASS website or related requirements throughout this RFR, shall be superseded by comparable requirements pertaining to the COMMBUYS website; and (6) in the event the Commonwealth adopts an alternate market center system, successful Bidders will be required to utilize such system, as directed by the procuring entity. Commonwealth Commodity Codes are based on the United Nations Standard Products and Services Code (UNSPSC).

The COMMBUYS system introduces new terminology, which bidders must be familiar with in order to conduct business with the Commonwealth. To view this terminology and to learn more about the COMMBUYS system, please visit the [COMMBUYS Resource Center](#).

Multiple Quotes. Bidders may not submit Multiple Quotes in response to a Bid unless the RFR authorizes them to do so. If a Bidder submits multiple quotes in response to an RFR that does not authorize multiple responses, only the latest dated quote submitted prior to the bid opening date will be evaluated.

Quote Content. Bid specifications for delivery, shipping, billing and payment will prevail over any proposed Bidder terms entered as part of the Quote, unless otherwise specified in the Bid.

Supplier Diversity Program (SDP). Massachusetts Executive Order 524 established a policy to promote the award of state contracts in a manner that develops and strengthens Minority and Women Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) that resulted in the Supplier Diversity Program in Public Contracting. M/WBEs are strongly encouraged to submit responses to this RFR, either as prime vendors, joint venture partners or other type of business partnerships. Similarly, Executive Order 546 established the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE) Program to encourage the participation of businesses owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans in all areas of state procurement and contracting, thereby including them in the SDP. All bidders must follow the requirements set forth in the SDP section of the RFR, which will detail the specific requirements relating to the prime vendor's inclusion of M/WBEs and/or SDVOBEs. Bidders are required to develop creative initiatives to help foster new business relationships with M/WBEs and/or SDVOBEs within the primary industries affected by this RFR. In order to satisfy the compliance of this section and encourage bidder's participation of SDP objectives, the Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Plan for large procurements greater than \$150,000 will be evaluated at 10% or more of the total evaluation. Once an SDP commitment, expressed as a percentage of contract revenues, is approved, the agency will then monitor the contractor's performance, and use actual expenditures with SDO certified M/WBE contractors and the Center for Veterans Enterprise certified SDVOBEs to fulfill their own SDP expenditure benchmarks. M/WBE and SDVOBE participation must be incorporated into and monitored for all types of procurements regardless of size; however, submission of an SDP Plan is mandated only for large procurements over \$150,000.

Unless otherwise specified in the RFR, the following SDP forms are required to be submitted by the deadlines noted below in order to meet the mandatory participation requirements of the SDP:

SDP Plan Form #/Name	Submitted By	When Submitted
SDP Plan Form #1 – SDP Plan Commitment	All Bidders	With Bid Response
SDP Plan Form #2 – Declaration of SDP Partners	Newly Awarded Contractors	Within 30 days of contract execution
SDP Plan Form #3 – SDP Spending Report	Contractors	Within 45 days of the end of each quarter

Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Resources:

- Resources available to assist Prime Bidders in finding potential **Minority Business Enterprises (MBE)** and **Women Business Enterprises (WBE)** partners can be found at: www.mass.gov/sdp
- Resources available to assist Prime Bidders in finding potential **Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE)** partners can be found on the Operational Services Division's SDO webpage at: www.mass.gov/sdo
- The Operational Services Division's Supplier Diversity Program offers training on the SDP Plan requirements. The dates of upcoming trainings can be found at: <http://www.mass.gov/anf/budget-taxes-and-procurement/procurement-info-and-res/osd-events-and-training/osd-training-and-outreach.html> In addition, the SDP Webinar can be located on the SDP website at www.mass.gov/SDP.

Supplier Diversity Program Subcontracting Policies. In addition to the Subcontracting Policies (See Subcontracting Policies section below and see Section 9, Subcontracting By Contractor, in the Commonwealth Terms and Conditions) that apply to all subcontracted services, agencies may define specific required deliverables for a contractor's SDP Plan, including, but not limited to, documentation necessary to verify subcontractor commitments and expenditures with Minority- or Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business

Enterprises (SDVOBE) for the purpose of monitoring and enforcing commitments made in a contractor's Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) Plan.

Agricultural Products Preference (only applicable if this is a procurement for Agricultural Products) - Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2006 directs the State Purchasing Agent to grant a preference to products of agriculture grown or produced using locally grown products. Such locally grown or produced products shall be purchased unless the price of the goods exceeds the price of products of agriculture from outside the Commonwealth by more than 10%. For purposes of this preference, products of agriculture are defined to include any agricultural, aquacultural, floricultural or horticultural commodities, the growing and harvesting of forest products, the raising of livestock, including horses, raising of domesticated animals, bees, fur-bearing animals and any forestry or lumbering operations.

Best Value Selection and Negotiation. The Strategic Sourcing Team or SST (formerly referred to as Procurement Management Team or PMT) may select the response(s) which demonstrates the best value overall, including proposed alternatives that will achieve the procurement goals of the department. The SST and a selected bidder, or a contractor, may negotiate a change in any element of contract performance or cost identified in the original RFR or the selected bidder's or contractor's response which results in lower costs or a more cost effective or better value than was presented in the selected bidder's or contractor's original response.

Bidder Communication. Bidders are prohibited from communicating directly with any employee of the procuring department or any member of the SST regarding this RFR except as specified in this RFR, and no other individual Commonwealth employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any question or inquiry concerning this RFR. Bidders may contact the contact person for this RFR in the event this RFR is incomplete or the bidder is having trouble obtaining any required attachments electronically through COMMBUYS.

Contract Expansion. If additional funds become available during the contract duration period, the department reserves the right to increase the maximum obligation to some or all contracts executed as a result of this RFR or to execute contracts with contractors not funded in the initial selection process, subject to available funding, satisfactory contract performance and service or commodity need.

Costs. Costs which are not specifically identified in the bidder's response, and accepted by a department as part of a contract, will not be compensated under any contract awarded pursuant to this RFR. The Commonwealth will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders responding to this RFR.

Debriefing. ☞ *Required for POS Only. This is an optional specification for non-POS RFRs.* Non-successful bidders may request a debriefing from the department that issued the RFR. Department debriefing procedures may be found in the RFR. Non-successful POS bidders aggrieved by the decision of a department must participate in a debriefing as a prerequisite to an administrative appeal.

Debriefing/Appeals: Administrative Appeals to Departments. ☞ *Required for POS Only. Not applicable to non-POS bidders.* Non-successful bidders who participate in the debriefing process and remain aggrieved with the decision of the department may appeal that decision to the department head. Department appeal procedures may be found in the RFR.

Debriefing/Appeals: Administrative Appeals to OSD. ☞ *Required for POS Only. Not applicable to non-POS bidders.* Non-successful bidders who participate in the department appeal process and remain aggrieved by the selection decision of the department may appeal the department decision to the Operational Services Division. The basis for an appeal to OSD is limited to the following grounds:

1. The competitive procurement conducted by the department failed to comply with applicable regulations and guidelines. These would be limited to the requirements of 801 CMR 21.00 or any successor regulations, the policies in the OSD Procurement Information Center, subsequent policies and procedures issued by OSD and the specifications of the RFR; or
2. There was a fundamental unfairness in the procurement process. The allegation of unfairness or bias is one that is easier to allege than prove, consequently, the burden of proof rests with the bidder to provide sufficient and

specific evidence in support of its claim. OSD will presume that departments conducted a fair procurement absent documentation to the contrary.

Requests for an appeal must be sent to the attention of the Operational Services Division, Legal, Policy and Compliance Office, Room 1017, One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108 and be received within fourteen (14) calendar days of the postmark of the notice of the department head's decision on appeal. Appeal requests must specify in sufficient detail the basis for the appeal. Sufficient detail requires a description of the published policy or procedure which was applied and forms the basis for the appeal and presentation of all information that supports the claim under paragraphs 1 or 2 above. OSD reserves the right to reject appeal requests based on grounds other than those stated above or those submitted without sufficient detail on the basis for the appeal.

The decision of the Operational Services Division shall be rendered, in writing, setting forth the grounds for the decision within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the appeal request. Pending appeals to the Operational Services Division shall not prohibit the department from proceeding with executing contracts.

Electronic Communication/Update of Bidder's/Contractor's Contact Information. It is the responsibility of the prospective bidder and awarded contractor to keep current on COMMBUYS the email address of the bidder's contact person and prospective contract manager, if awarded a contract, and to monitor that email inbox for communications from the SST, including requests for clarification. The SST and the Commonwealth assume no responsibility if a prospective bidder's/awarded contractor's designated email address is not current, or if technical problems, including those with the prospective bidder's/awarded contractor's computer, network or internet service provider (ISP) cause email communications sent to/from the prospective bidder/awarded contractor and the SST to be lost or rejected by any means including email or spam filtering.

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). All bidders responding to this RFR must agree to participate in the Commonwealth Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) program for receiving payments, unless the bidder can provide compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. EFT is a benefit to both contractors and the Commonwealth because it ensures fast, safe and reliable payment directly to contractors and saves both parties the cost of processing checks. Contractors are able to track and verify payments made electronically through the Comptroller's Vendor Web system. A link to the EFT application can be found on the [OSD Forms](http://www.mass.gov/osd) page (www.mass.gov/osd). Additional information about EFT is available on the [VendorWeb](http://www.mass.gov/osc) site (www.mass.gov/osc). Click on MASSfinance.

Successful bidders, upon notification of contract award, will be required to enroll in EFT as a contract requirement by completing and submitting the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* to this department for review, approval and forwarding to the Office of the Comptroller. If the bidder is already enrolled in the program, it may so indicate in its response. Because the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* contains banking information, this form, and all information contained on this form, shall not be considered a public record and shall not be subject to public disclosure through a public records request.

The requirement to use EFT may be waived by the SST on a case-by-case basis if participation in the program would be unduly burdensome on the bidder. If a bidder is claiming that this requirement is a hardship or unduly burdensome, the specific reason must be documented in its response. The SST will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis and communicate the findings with the bidder.

Environmental Response Submission Compliance. In the event that paper submissions are required and in an effort to promote greater use of recycled and environmentally preferable products and minimize waste, all required paper responses that are submitted should comply with the following guidelines:

- All copies should be printed double sided.
- All submittals and copies should be printed on recycled paper with a minimum post-consumer content of 30% or on tree-free paper (i.e. paper made from raw materials other than trees, such as kenaf). To document the use of such paper, a photocopy of the ream cover/wrapper should be included with the response.

- Unless absolutely necessary, all responses and copies should minimize or eliminate use of non-recyclable or non-re-usable materials such as plastic report covers, plastic dividers, vinyl sleeves and GBC binding. Three ringed binders, glued materials, paper clips and staples are acceptable.
- Bidders should submit materials in a format which allows for easy removal and recycling of paper materials.
- Bidders are encouraged to use other products which contain recycled content in their response documents. Such products may include, but are not limited to, folders, binders, paper clips, diskettes, envelopes, boxes, etc. Where appropriate, bidders should note which products in their responses are made with recycled materials.
- Unnecessary samples, attachments or documents not specifically asked for should not be submitted.

Executive Order 509, Establishing Nutrition Standards for Food Purchased and Served by State Agencies. Food purchased and served by state agencies must be in compliance with Executive Order 509, issued in January 2009. Under this Executive Order, all contracts resulting from procurements posted after July 1, 2009 that involve the purchase and provision of food must comply with nutrition guidelines established by the Department of Public Health (DPH). The nutrition guidelines are available at the Department's website: [Executive Order # 509 Guidance](#).

Filing Requirements. *☞ Required for POS Only. Not applicable to non-POS bidders.* Successful bidders must have filed their Uniform Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's Report (UFR), as required for current contractors, with the Operational Services Division via the Internet using the UFR eFiling application for the most recently completed fiscal year before a contract can be executed and services may begin. Other contractor qualification/risk management reporting requirements and non-filing consequences promulgated by secretariats or departments pursuant to 808 CMR 1.04(3) may also apply. In the event immediate services are required by a department, a contract may be executed and services may begin with the approval of OSD and the appropriate secretariat. However, unless authorized by OSD and the appropriate secretariat, the contractor will not be paid for any such services rendered until the UFR has been filed.

HIPAA: Business Associate Contractual Obligations. Bidders are notified that any department meeting the definition of a Covered Entity under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) will include in the RFR and resulting contract sufficient language establishing the successful bidder's contractual obligations, if any, that the department will require in order for the department to comply with HIPAA and the privacy and security regulations promulgated thereunder (45 CFR Parts 160, 162, and 164) (the Privacy and Security Rules). For example, if the department determines that the successful bidder is a business associate performing functions or activities involving protected health information, as such terms are used in the Privacy and Security Rules, then the department will include in the RFR and resulting contract a sufficient description of business associate's contractual obligations regarding the privacy and security of the protected health information, as listed in 45 CFR 164.314 and 164.504 (e), including, but not limited to, the bidder's obligation to: implement administrative, physical, and technical safeguards that reasonably and appropriately protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the protected health information (in whatever form it is maintained or used, including verbal communications); provide individuals access to their records; and strictly limit use and disclosure of the protected health information for only those purposes approved by the department. Further, the department reserves the right to add any requirement during the course of the contract that it determines it must include in the contract in order for the department to comply with the Privacy and Security Rules. Please see other sections of the RFR for any further HIPAA details, if applicable.

Minimum Quote (Bid Response) Duration. Bidders Quotes made in response to this Bid must remain in effect for at least 90 days from the date of quote submission.

Prompt Payment Discounts (PPD). All bidders responding to this procurement must agree to offer discounts through participation in the Commonwealth Prompt Payment Discount (PPD) initiative for receiving early and/or on-time payments, unless the bidder can provide compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. PPD benefits both contractors and the Commonwealth. Contractors benefit by increased, usable cash flow as a result of fast and efficient payments for commodities or services rendered. Participation in the Electronic Funds Transfer initiative further maximizes the benefits with payments directed to designated accounts, thus eliminating the impact of check clearance policies and traditional mail lead time or delays. The Commonwealth benefits because contractors reduce the cost of

products and services through the applied discount. Payments that are processed electronically can be tracked and verified through the Comptroller's Vendor Web system. The PPD form can be found as an attachment for this Bid on [COMMBUYS](#).

Bidders must submit agreeable terms for Prompt Payment Discount using the PPD form within their proposal, unless otherwise specified by the SST. The SST will review, negotiate or reject the offering as deemed in the best interest of the Commonwealth.

The requirement to use PPD offerings may be waived by the SST on a case-by-case basis if participation in the program would be unduly burdensome on the bidder. If a bidder is claiming that this requirement is a hardship or unduly burdensome, the specific reason must be documented in or attached to the PPD form.

Provider Data Management. *☞ Required for POS Only. Not applicable to non-POS bidders.* The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has established a Provider Data Management (PDM) business service that is integrated into the Virtual Gateway. PDM is accessible by providers with current POS contracts. Departments may require that bidders with current POS contracts submit certain RFR-required documents through PDM. These documents have been specified in the RFR. When submitting documents via PDM, bidders are required to print and sign a PDM Documentation Summary. PDM users should verify that all information is accurate and current in PDM. Bidders are required to include the signed PDM Documentation Summary in their RFR response.

Public Records. All responses and information submitted in response to this RFR are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L., c. 66, s. 10, and to c. 4, s. 7, ss. 26. Any statements in submitted responses that are inconsistent with these statutes shall be disregarded.

Reasonable Accommodation. Bidders with disabilities or hardships that seek reasonable accommodation, which may include the receipt of RFR information in an alternative format, must communicate such requests in writing to the contact person. Requests for accommodation will be addressed on a case by case basis. A bidder requesting accommodation must submit a written statement which describes the bidder's disability and the requested accommodation to the contact person for the RFR. The SST reserves the right to reject unreasonable requests.

Restriction on the Use of the Commonwealth Seal. Bidders and contractors are not allowed to display the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Seal in their bid package or subsequent marketing materials if they are awarded a contract because use of the coat of arms and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth for advertising or commercial purposes is prohibited by law.

Subcontracting Policies. Prior approval of the department is required for any subcontracted service of the contract. Contractors are responsible for the satisfactory performance and adequate oversight of its subcontractors. Human and social service subcontractors are also required to meet the same state and federal financial and program reporting requirements and are held to the same reimbursable cost standards as contractors.

Workplace Violence and Prevention and Crisis Response Plan. *☞ Required for POS Only. Not applicable to non-POS bidders.* 101 CMR 19.00, Workplace Violence and Prevention and Crisis Response Plan, governs the procedures and criteria for workplace violence prevention and response plans for programs that provide direct services to clients that are operated, licensed, certified or funded by a department, commission, office, board, division, institution or other entity within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services under M.G.L. c. 6A § 16. Any direct service program that contracts with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) or the constituent agencies of EOHHS must comply with 101 CMR 19.00, including having a plan that meets the criteria set forth in 101 CMR 19.04, which is updated annually, available electronically and provided to any human service worker upon request. The regulations and response plan guidelines are available at the following web site: www.mass.gov/hhs/HSW-safety-regs

Attachment A:

USDA's List of Specialty Crops: Please go to www.usda.gov and the specialty crop block grant page in order to see the USDA's list of eligible specialty crops and other key resources.

Fruit and Tree Nuts					
Almond	Apple	Apricot	Avocado	Banana	Blackberry
Blueberry	Breadfruit	Cacao	Cashew	Citrus	Cherimoya
Cherry	Chestnuts (for nuts)	Coconut	Coffee	Cranberry	Currant
Date	Feijoa	Fig	Filbert (hazelnut)	Gooseberry	Grape (includ. raisin)
Guava	Kiwi	Litchi	Macadamia	Mango	Nectarine
Olive	Papaya	Passion Fruit	Peach	Pear	Pecan
Persimmon	Pineapple	Pistachio	Plum (includ. prune)	Pomegranate	Quince
Raspberry	Strawberry	Suriname Cherry	Walnut		
Vegetables					
Artichoke	Asparagus	Bean (snap or green Lima dry, edible)	Beet, table	Broccoli (includ. broccoli rabe)	Brussels sprouts
Cabbage (includ. Chinese)	Carrot	Cauliflower	Celeriac	Celery	Chive
Collards (includ. kale)	Cucumber	Edamame	Eggplant	Endive	Garlic
Horseradish	Kohlrabi	Leek	Melon (all types)	Mushroom (cultivated)	Mustard and other greens
Okra	Pea (garden, English or edible pod)	Onion	Opuntia	Parsley	Parsnip
Pepper	Potato	Pumpkin	Radish (all types)	Rhubarb	Rutabaga
Salsify	Spinach	Squash (winter and summer)	Sweet corn	Sweet potato	Swiss chard
Taro	Tomato (includ. tomatillo)	Turnip	Watermelon		
Culinary Herbs and Spices					
Ajwain	Allspice	Angelica	Anise	Annatto	Artemisia (all types)
Asafetida	Basil (all types)	Bay (cultivated)	Bladder wrack	Bolivian Coriander	Borage
Calendula	Chamomile	Candle nut	Caper	Caraway	Cardamom
Cassia	Catnip	Chervil	Chicory	Cicely	Cilantro
Cinnamon	Clary	Cloves	Comfrey	Common rue	Coriander
Cress	Cumin	Curry	Dill	Fennel	Fenugreek
Filé (gumbo, cultivated)	Finger root	French Sorrel	Galangal	Ginger	Hops
Horsehound	Hyssop	Lavender	Lemon thyme	Lovage	Mace
Mahlab	Malabathrum	Marjoram	Mint (all types)	Nutmeg	Oregano
Orris root	Paprika	Parsley	Pepper	Rocket (arugula)	Rosemary
Rue	Saffron	Sage (all types)	Savory (all types)	Tarragon	Thyme
Vanilla	Wasabi	Water cress			
Medicinal Herbs					
Artemisia	Arum	Astragalus	Boldo	Cananga	Comfrey
Coneflower	Fenugreek	Feverfew	Foxglove	Ginkgo biloba	Ginseng
Goat's rue	Goldenseal	Gypsywort	Horehound	Horsetail	Lavender
Licquorice	Marshmallow	Mullein	Passion flower	Patchouli	Pennyroyal
Pokeweed	St. John's wort	Senna	Skullcap	Sonchus	Sorrel
Stevia	Tansy	Urtica	Witch hazel	Wood betony	Wormwood
Yarrow	Yerba Buena				
Nursery, Floriculture and Horticulture Crops					
Christmas Trees	Cut Flowers	Honey	Turfgrass	Tea Leaves	Maple Syrup
					Honey

Note: Under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), turfgrass sod is not eligible. Under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program—Farm Bill (SCBGP-FB), horticulture was added to the definition making turfgrass sod and seed eligible.

